PHARMACY

Rx for success

Are you looking for a career that is interesting, pays well and benefits society? Pharmacy may be just the prescription for a successful future.

Today might seem a bit early to plan your entire career—but your days as a taxpaying citizen are close at hand. The more you think about what you're going to do tomorrow, the better chance you have of landing a job that you enjoy and providing a lifestyle you desire.

You may have heard that the economy and the job market are not in the best shape right now, and the rumors are, unfortunately, true. However, there is a demand for and, in actuality, a shortage of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

"There's no question that the need for pharmacists is staggering," says Chris Lane, vice president of pharmacy operations at drug chain Duane Reade. In fact, there will be an anticipated shortfall of about 157,000 pharmacists by 2020, according to findings from the Pharmacy Manpower Project Inc. This means that those of you who choose a career in pharmacy are not only virtually guaranteed jobs, but will be paid top dollar as drug stores, mass market retailers, pharmaceutical research corporations, hospitals and a number of other operations compete to hire you.

"There's a crying need for pharmacists in all roles," stresses Dr. Barbara G. Wells, president of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy and dean of The University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy.

You may be wondering why the number of people needed to work in the field of pharmacy is rising so dramatically. The substantial increase in demand is being driven by a number of factors. Health issues are on the rise as the biggest population demographic—the baby boomer—is aging. Statistically, that means a spike in the number of people afflicted with age-related disorders, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes.

Trained experts are in demand as pharmaceutical companies continue to come out with more new drugs each year, created to help people combat diseases from arthritis and cancer to allergies and heart disease. Biotechnology-related drugs, which work according to newly discovered findings in the human genome, are just starting to hit the market and will address ailments and even genetic conditions for which drugs have not yet been available.

The field of pharmacogenomics is also about to explode—it's the study of how patient's genetic variations affect the way they react to various drugs and will affect the way drugs are prescribed in the future. The result is an increasing number of prescriptions that need to be filled, endless research opportunities, a fast growing biotech industry as well as new corporate challenges that provide a variety of career options for pharmacists.

PHARMACIST AS HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Because of escalating medical costs and a shortage of doctors, many states have loosened the hold that doctors have had on patient care, allowing pharmacists to use their medication expertise to monitor patient care and therapies.

Pharmacists are key contributors in a number of programs that have been created to make medicines accessible and affordable.

One example is a new initiative between two important industry organizations that are working to make it easier for consumers to get the medications they need. Together Rx and Pharmacy Care Alliance are focusing on educating "low-income seniors about meaningful drug assistance programs offered by pharmaceutical companies," explains Craig L. Fuller, president and CEO of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, or NACDS. "By offering one-card access to savings, this program makes it easier for 8 million to 11 million Medicare enrollees—who have no prescription drug coverage—to get medicines used to treat some common afflictions of older Americans, such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, cancer and arthritis."

More than 150 prescription medications are covered through this program, and 150,000 seniors have enrolled. By becoming a pharmacist, you can work one-on-one with these and other patients and fill an increasing need for expert pharmacists.

GREAT PAY

Aside from all of the expanded services that pharmacists are adding to their job descriptions and the help the career provides others, pharmacy also puts you on a fast career track. Entry-level pay in the profession is high. "About $65,000 to $70,000 a year in urban areas," added Duane Reade's Lane.

The field not only is lucrative, but prestigious and stable. Pay is often even higher than the figures Lane gives. According to a 2001 survey by *Drug Topics* magazine, the median annual earnings of pharmacists (including overtime and bonuses) in 2000 was $78,624 per year as compared to $64,980 per year in 1999.

The Gallup Organization has consistently ranked pharmacists among the most trusted of professionals. By taking proactive control of your future with a career in pharmacy, a skill set that will continue to be in-demand, you can chart a course for long-term success.

WHAT EXACTLY DOES A PHARMACIST DO?

Lots. It's time to forget the notion that all pharmacists do is count out pills. Dispensing drugs is certainly part of the job, but the career goes far beyond simply working behind the counter. The settings vary—from an enlisted position on a military base to a pharmacist at your local chain pharmacy or independent pharmacy. Career options include:

- Community pharmacy
- Hospital/clinical pharmacy
- Long-term care facilities
- Academic
- Retail
- Independent pharmacy ownership
- Pharmacy benefits manager
- Research
- Armed services
- Public health service
- Mail order/Internet pharmacy